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Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks News Release

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Drug Trafficker Arrested in Sequoia National Park Receives Sentence

A man found guilty of drug trafficking was sentenced last week to 10 years in federal prison on charges of conspiracy to manufacture, to distribute, and to possess with the intent to distribute marijuana, for growing thousands of marijuana plants in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and being an illegal alien in possession of a firearm.

Gilberto Ontiveros Valencia, a Mexican national, was arrested by park rangers during a raid on a marijuana grow site in the park in 2009. Following the arrest, agents from the Investigative Services Branch (ISB) of the National Park Service continued the investigation and prosecution. Ontiveros Valencia was suspected of being responsible for all the marijuana grow sites within one canyon of the park since 2002. ISB had linked him to two marijuana grow sites within the park in 2005.

Ontiveros Valencia was responsible for damaging over five acres of previously undisturbed park land. During cleanup operations at the site, park rangers removed over 1000 pounds of garbage; 10,000 feet of irrigation hose; and an extensive array of hazardous materials including fertilizers, pesticides, rodenticides, and propane canisters. As part of the successful prosecution, on September 20, Ontiveros Valencia was sentenced to ten years in prison and was ordered to pay \$59,094 in restitution to the park for the costs of cleanup operations and for the amount of damage to natural resources.

This success of this case is an excellent example of the strong working relationship between the Investigative Services Branch, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the park rangers of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

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